

A RAILROAD THAT ISSUES ITS OWN NEWSPAPER

Of Employees, by Employees, for Employees Is "The Pennsylvania News," a Paper Without Politics or Advertisements, and No Purpose Except to Tell "What's Doing on the Line"

By ROBERT B. PECK



"The Pennsylvania News's" only girl correspondent, Miss Mattie Miner, interviewing Lord and Lady Mountbatten in Union Station, Chicago

A NEWSPAPER without politics and without advertising, whose private ends are served simply by service to the community and whose staff serves without pay—it sounds visionary enough for the maddest hatters of Greenwich Village, but here is such a publication, two of them, in fact, and they are corporation products.

The publications are "The Pennsylvania News," of the central region of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and "The Pennsylvania News," of the northwestern region of the same railroad system. Directors of the road are to decide this month whether the enterprise is to be extended and a similar paper published by the employees of the eastern region, which includes New York and Philadelphia and has almost twice as many employees as the 60,000 in the central region.

The clannishness of railroad men is something that a few months or years of bureaucratic control cannot kill, but the vociferous pride of a railroad man in his own railroad, the intense interest in his own part in running it and the firm conviction that the whole system would go to pot if he relaxed his attention for a day were found to have been sadly impaired by government control.

Waning Morale Is Serious Among 200,000 Men

The declining morale was a problem which officers of the railroad considered a grave one, not because in its present stage it impaired the efficiency of the system to any extent, but because it showed a tendency to continue, and a concern whose more than 200,000 employees are spread out over more than 27,000 miles of track finds it difficult to restore cohesion, once it begins to dwindle.

It was suggested trying a newspaper, a real newspaper, free from propaganda and the customary paternalistic tendency of "house organs." A newspaper that the employees themselves got out, that gave the news of the region in which it was published and only the news, might revive the *esprit de corps*, he thought.

The directors thought the plan was worth trying. In the latter part of last year they authorized an appropriation of \$14,000 to give the newspaper experiment a six months' test in the central region, the hub of which is Pittsburgh.

The Pittsburgh district was selected because it is one in which the traditions of the road are strongest, and where there are numerous employees of many years' service. It is also one of the most important of the regional areas.

It was a highly successful experiment. The first issue of the newspaper was published on January 15, and it has been coming out every two weeks ever since. After the first few issues, which were scrutinized searchingly, but in vain, by many of its readers for signs of the propaganda they suspected to be concealed somewhere in the four pages it was sought eagerly and carried home to be read by the whole family.

For the first six months it cost only \$11,000 to get out the paper. Sixty thousand copies of each issue were printed. Not one of them is to be found littering the right of way after it is off the press. There is too much news in it to be thrown away unread—news of the reader's own family and of his friends on the road.

First an Experiment, Now a Fixture

After the first few issues "The Pennsylvania News" had an established place. It is doubtful now if the road could abandon it if it wanted to. Certainly it could not do so without a most disquieting clamor arising. The paper filled a need. It was a success.

When the six months' probation period was up there was no question of discontinuing it. The morale of the central region had never been better. The railroad was getting big dividends in renewed personal interest in the "Pennsy" from its modest investment. Instead of discontinuing the paper another was started in the northwestern region, a smaller district, extending from Toledo to Chicago.

Until the first few numbers had been distributed, however, even those in charge of the project could not be certain that they would succeed.



A. L. Cunningham learns from Conductor H. V. Caldwell that hunters are bringing in oodles of game from the mountain district around Altoona

E. N. Lewis, of Ivy Lee's staff, a former newspaper man and a former officer in the 77th Division, was sent to Pittsburgh to get the paper going. Beyond the fact that he was to establish a newspaper that could be run six months for \$14,000 or less Mr. Lewis was practically uninstructed. Even the name of the paper had not been selected.

His first step was to get the information in circulation that such a publication was to be issued. Then he consulted with various officials and experienced employees as to a staff. He had to have a staff and it must be composed of railroad men, probably without experience in newspaper work, who would be willing to undertake the job for art's sake alone. Except for the editor, his stenographer and an artist who is occasionally employed, no salaries are paid on "The Pennsylvania News."

Mr. Lewis made it his business to find out what men were interested in writing, what men had the widest acquaintance in the region and what men were most thoroughly conversant with what was going on in their divisions.

He found out who had been writing verse for the local newspapers or who had been writing letters to editors of these papers. He found out who kept scrapbooks, who used cameras and who had talent with a drawing board.

Then he invited contributions. The result was amazing. Though perhaps a bit dubious as to the validity of this newspaper that the road was going to get out and distribute free the railroad men of the central region were willing to take a chance. Enough "copy" to supply the paper for years to come came avalanching in.

The Editor's Trouble Was Not Filling Space

There were poems and drawings and essays, scrapbooks in which the owners had pasted anything that struck their fancy for years and sent on with the kindly suggestion that perhaps the editor could find something of value there, and there were pictures and cartoons by the dozen.

It was a time for tact. Obviously, even had the material itself been usable, not one-tenth could have been crammed into the paper, and yet the senders must not be offended, for such interest was a most valuable asset, and somewhere among their number was the future staff of "The Pennsylvania News."

Personal letters were written to all those who had sent contributions. Everything original that possibly could be whipped into shape and got into the paper was accepted. The authors of the other articles or, as it happened in some cases, the clippers of them, were informed most politely and explicitly just why they could not be used.

Sometimes the contributions were personally conducted. A somewhat embarrassed, but most determined, brakeman swaggered in one morning with a large drawing board under his arm.

"Say," he demanded, "are youse the editor?" Assured of that fact, he slapped his burden on the desk, face up. It was a picture of a locomotive, drawn head-on, with headlight cleaving the night.

"Well, say," said the artist, "this ain't much good, I don't suppose, but us fellas up an' this is what we think you oughta call this paper, 'The Searchlight.' See?"

He indicated lettering on the drawing with his stubby forefinger. "The Searchlight," it ran "It Penetrates evrywhere."

"That's what us fellas in the baggage car thinks about it," said the brakeman. "See?"

The drawing, lettering and all, was accepted with thanks and without a snicker. Later it was reproduced in "The Pennsylvania News," with the spelling corrected, as the suggestion of Brakeman So-and-So.

That was the spirit in which the paper was

started, and it was just that perception of the kindly motive behind the sometimes ludicrous attempts to help that made the paper the prompt success it was.

It is a seven-column paper, printed on newsprint in regular newspaper form. The front page is devoted to articles of general interest throughout the region, with a standing box at the bottom of the page headed "The Roll of Honor," in which are published the pictures and brief biographies of employees and officials retired on pensions.

The second page is the editorial page. It has one editorial, written from the employee's viewpoint rather than from the employer's, signed articles, letters to the editor, a puzzle and the newly established women's department, which takes up four columns.

The third page is devoted to deaths, births, marriages and personal items of all kinds. Since the establishment of the paper 2,000 names have been mentioned on an average in every number.

The fourth page is devoted to sports, in which, particularly in baseball and boxing, railroad men take a keen interest. The Pennsylvania system has its own athletic league, and competition among the teams of various divisions and regions is sharp. Last September games were held in Altoona in which there were 800 entrants.

Every page is enlivened with numerous cuts. There are photographs, cartoons and comic strips, all by employees of the road, and many of them pictures which would pass muster in any paper. One of the best cartoonists uncovered by the early issues of the paper is C. H. Molson, a negro, who at the time was assistant chief on the private car of one of the vice-presidents of the road.

"The Pennsylvania News" was founded as an employees' newspaper, and makes no claim to being an employees' magazine," said L. B. Sisson, who became editor of the paper after Mr. Lewis had it started. "It is rather an

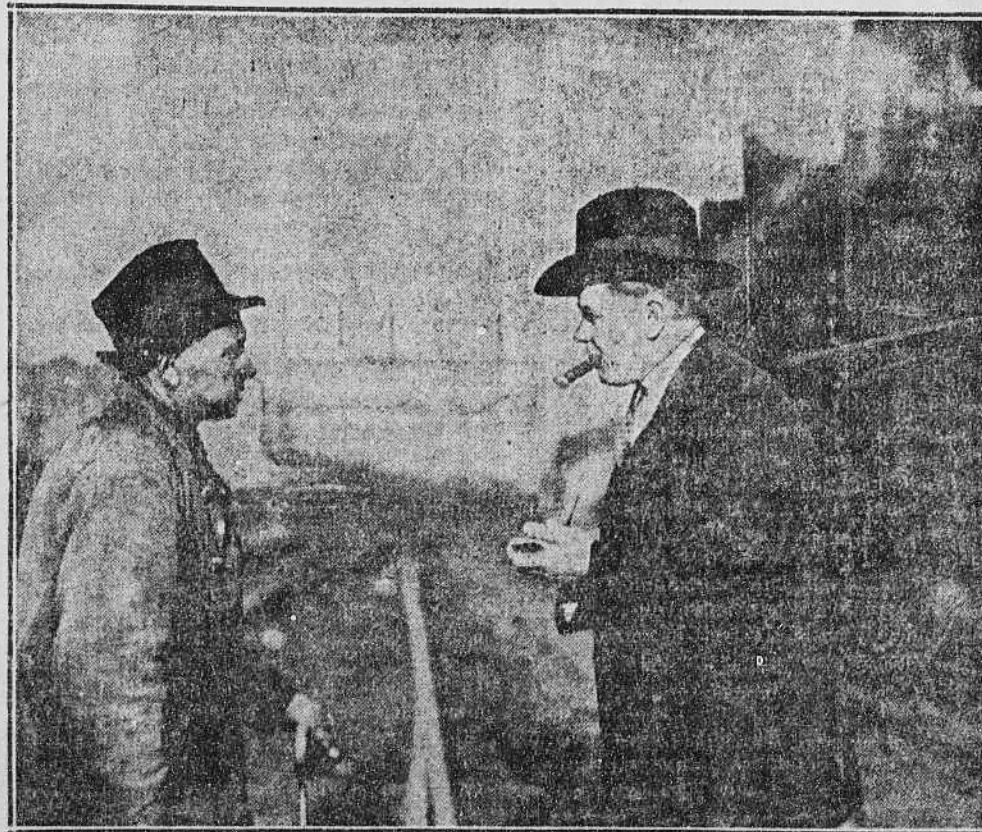
Ed. Stahl, correspondent for the Grand Rapids Division, uses a gasoline hand-car to get over the rails in pursuit of news

approximation of a country weekly in railroad overalls. At least 90 per cent of the space is devoted to news about the employees themselves and the activities of members of their families. The remaining space is used for new developments in the railroad property in which the Pennsylvania employees are interested, humor, cartoons, poems and a short editorial. Company or management propaganda has no place in the paper. It is as near a railroad family newspaper as the employees, with the guidance of the editorial staff, can make it. The newspaper seeks to interest and entertain the employee. No attempt is made to 'uplift' or preach."

Mr. Sisson was city editor of a Pittsburgh daily when he accepted the offer to become editor of "The Pennsylvania News." Before going to Pittsburgh he had been editor of an Illinois newspaper. He has an assistant editor and thirteen "divisional correspondents" on his staff, as well as a staff artist and three other artists whose work appears often enough almost to make them members of the staff.

Each divisional correspondent is in charge of gathering the news in the division in which he is stationed. They are the main reliance of the newspaper. Only one of them ever had any newspaper experience previously. He wrote sports for a paper in Erie. The rest were railroad men, as pure, though perhaps not quite as simple, as ever they come.

E. J. Vogel, the assistant editor, was in the general office of the system in Philadelphia. C. M. Speed, C. P. Holler, C. H. Purcell, H. K. Sandler, G. N. Anderson and C. A. Hartz, all of them divisional correspondents, are clerks. A. L. Cunningham and S. B. Murphy are movement directors, whose jobs partake somewhat of that of the train dispatcher and somewhat of that of the superintendent. E. J. Wilson is a safety agent. Merton Pennock is a relief board committeeman. F. E. Lindquist is a telegraph operator. P. L. Mahaffey is an extra station agent. J. C. Shingledecker is a freight conductor.



G. L. Shingledecker, chief correspondent Allegheny Division, is a freight conductor. He dresses up now and then and "covers" trackmen and section hands

Merton Pennock, chief division correspondent, Buffalo, probing a personal from Baggageman F. S. Marshall, who has been on the job since 1883

The staff artist, G. F. Ebding, is a ticket agent in Cleveland. The other three artists, who rank almost as high, are M. Suvak, who is an engine house clerk in Cleveland; E. H. Doyle, who is a telegraph operator in Akron, and F. E. Johnson, the sixteen-year-old son of the station agent in Spring Creek, Pa.

They constitute a staff of which Mr. Sisson is proud. Many of them get no time off from their railroad work to attend to their newspaper duties. All of them put in longer hours and harder work at their newspaper task, when they buckle down to it, than they are accustomed to even in their exacting vocation.

None of them draws any pay for his work on the staff of "The Pennsylvania News." Their only reward is the artist's pride in his work, and there is not the slightest doubt that regard it as ample.

"You might call the whole enterprise an experiment in psychology," said Mr. Sisson. "While the success of the experiment depended upon the reaction of the men as a whole, the reaction upon individuals is no less interesting and this can be seen in the men of our staff."

"We appealed to their passion for self-expression, and the appeal was wonderfully successful. We have a staff that could write copy for any metropolitan daily, and the copy would go over the desk with few changes. It is clean copy."

"Our correspondents ten months ago were mature men, who never had given a conscious thought to how the newspapers they read were constructed, to what constituted news or by what process it got into print. We took them from freight stations, roundhouses, telegraph offices, ticket offices—wherever we happened to find likely candidates."

Railway Men Make Accurate Reporters

"So far as we could see, they had just one qualification for newspaper work—they were accurate. Railroad men have to be accurate. Lives depend upon the development of that faculty. When an error may send two passenger trains crashing together, the man controlling the movements of trains takes care that he makes no errors."

"We found our correspondents accurate from the first. In that they surpassed even the average newspaper reporter of experience. They had another invaluable quality; they were persevering. When a suggestion as to a possible 'story' was made to a correspondent he never reported that there was no story there. He came back with the story."

"Of course, at the start, they didn't recognize news. That is a part of the business that they are still learning, just as every newspaper man is still learning it. It was not long before they got the idea, however, and it is a rare occurrence indeed now when we have to send back a piece of copy for further details about some incident mentioned in it."

The work of the correspondents is more responsible in its nature than that of the average newspaper reporter. Each of them is responsible for a division in which some thousands of men are employed, spread out over miles of track. The correspondent is responsible for the news of his division, some of which he gets in person and some through volunteer "reporters."

Murphy has a way of getting the news that is found sometimes in the newspaper reporter, and when it is, makes him a source of envy and admiration to his fellows. Murphy, whom nature designed for a job in a roundhouse, takes things easy. He telephones from office to office and section to section and demands to know "What you got for the paper?"

He doesn't let his informants get away with "nothing" for an answer, either.

"Sure, you got something," bellows Murphy. "You gotta have something. Come across."

They come across. Nothing in the Pittsburgh district gets away from Murphy.

There is plenty of news in the Pittsburgh division, which somewhat simplifies Mr. Mur-



Contributor to the woman's column, culling suitable recipes from the dining car chef of the Broadway Limited

phy's task and may be largely responsible for the efficiency of his methods, though no one not endowed with the Murphy personality could employ them successfully.

Other divisions are smaller, less important and duller in the matter of news. Different tactics are employed in such places. The Marietta division is a small and remote one, with only about 500 employees. Normally it should rank in the volume of news printed pretty well toward the bottom in the list of divisions.

As a matter of fact, it ranks pretty well toward the top. The reason is Mahaffey. Mahaffey is the divisional correspondent, and he keeps his division as prominently before his public as is Winsted, Conn., before the readers of New York newspapers. Mahaffey is the Lew Stone of the Marietta division.

He packs a camera with him wherever he goes, and he goes wherever he figures he can find a legitimate news picture or frame up one. His pictures are a knock-out, and he always has a story to go with each with plenty of names in it. If it is to be a one-man picture Mahaffey makes sure that the man who poses for it is widely known on the system and popular.

The Marietta Division Gets on the Map

Mahaffey is the man who took a picture of a traveling crane in action. It doesn't sound hard, perhaps, but Mahaffey's picture showed the crane man at his levers, and when it is remembered that the crane man's cab is perched so high up in the roof angle of the shop that it looks like a birdhouse from the floor it can be seen that the picture was not an easy one to get.

Mahaffey, carrying his ponderous camera and flashlight paraphernalia as well, climbed a slender and rather shaky ladder, traversed six-inch girders with the confidence of a spider inspecting its web, and when he had reached a perilous perch that gave him a clear view of the crane man took careful aim and set off his flash.

It was a crackerjack picture. It was so good that it was used on the menu covers in Pennsylvania diners as well as printed in "The Pennsylvania News."

J. C. Shingledecker, who is correspondent in the Allegheny division, also carries a camera and knows how to use it. From a freight brakeman he has become a keen and indefatigable reporter. His news sense is acute.

His division is back in the mountains of western Pennsylvania. It is a great country for grapes and game. Shingledecker was quick to recognize that those were his big assets. When the grape crop was being moved he had a story in "The Pennsylvania News," illustrated with photographs, which showed just how it was moved, what part the Pennsylvania Railroad played in it, what employees of the road were occupied with the task, how the grapes were grown and harvested and what an important crop it was. It was a good story.

In the issue of November 15 Shingledecker had a hunting story. It is as complete and interesting a story from a hunter's point of view as could be desired. It gives the number of hunters and the quantity of game killed last season. It gives the names of hundreds of Pennsy employees who were hunting this season in the district, where they hunted and the amount of game bagged by each.

Where a Conductor Led The General Manager

There are photographs of two of the Pennsy hunters. One of them is a picture of Glenn S. Plante, a conductor, of Oil City, and the other that of C. S. Krick, general manager. Each is a one-column cut, and an illuminating beam is thrown on the policy of "The Pennsylvania News" by their position in the story.

The cut of the conductor is run ahead of the cut of the general manager. The reason probably is that conductor was in hunting togs and had his gun under one arm and several pheasants dangling from the other hand, which made his picture, from a news point of view, more interesting than that of the general manager, who wore collar and necktie, and had only a couple of setters with him as evidence of his intention.

Shingledecker, who covers with the expertness of an old hand at the business a division with 400 miles of track and 3,000 employees, has written for The Tribune something of his experience during his transition from freight brakeman to reporter. He tells of his utter ignorance of the work in the beginning, of the timidity with which he undertook it which im-

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